

## COMPRENSIÓN DE LECTURA - TASK 1 (1 x 7 = 7 marks)

Read the following film reviews and then decide which ones (A – E) correspond to questions 1 – 7. Some of the reviews may be required more than once. Sentence 0 has been completed as an example.

### FILM REVIEWS

#### A. THE BANQUET



The epic scale of this martial arts extravaganza has the contrary effect of dwarfing its actors, making miniatures of them in the opulence of its vast sets. The juiciest bits of *Hamlet* - poisoned blades and double-crossings - have been transferred to the ruthless king-making of 10th-century China. Drums beat and soldiers march as prince Daniel Wu returns to avenge the murder of his father.

*Hamlet's* Freudian crush on his mother is out in the open: here she's his stepmother and childhood friend (Zhang Ziyi), who was married off to his father and now his uncle. Chinese superstar Zhang is perhaps alone among the actors in making her presence felt, as an empress in possession of youth, beauty and icy ambition. But in spite of the ample resources on offer here, the combat scenes rarely dazzle. Where Zhang Yimou and Ang Lee revelled so gleefully in the genre's gravity-defying antics, you get the

impression that director Feng Xiaogang would like it to be known that his film is more serious than all that.

#### B. SHUTTER

*Shutter*, a debut by youthful co-directors Banjong Pisanthanakun and Parkpoom Mongpoom, - part mystery, part horror - features naturalistic acting from its lead duo, who are involved in a hit-and-run accident in the film's early stages. Impressive lead actor Ananda Everingham plays a photographer - cue plenty of creepy scenes in darkrooms and strange occurrences inside the frame.

*Shutter* doesn't entirely avoid the clichés of the genre - a lank-haired, scrawny girl seems to be a contractual obligation since Ring's *Sadako*, just as you have to have a magic sword in wuxia. But it largely avoids hysteria, while achieving some seriously creepy scenes amid an unpredictable plot.



#### C. HUNGER



McQueen is renowned as an artist and winner of the Turner prize, and this is his first feature film. I came to it sceptically, having been alienated by his video-art work *Deadpan* (1997). But *Hunger* shows that McQueen is a real film-maker and his background in art has meant a fierce concentration on image, an unflinching attention to what things looked like, moment by moment. There is an avoidance of affect and a repudiation of the traditional gestures of dialogue, dramatic consensus and narrative resolution. This is a

powerful, provocative piece of work, which leaves a zero-degree burn on the retina.

#### D. OF TIME AND THE CITY

Terence Davies' new film, his first for eight years, is a heartfelt and even ecstatic study of Liverpool, the home town of his 1950s boyhood. The movie is brashly emotional and sentimental - sometimes angry, more often hilarious. Nothing has given me more pleasure this year: the sweetness of its temper, the unfashionable seriousness of its design and its mixture of worldliness and innocence make for something sublime.

*Of Time and the City* was made possible by a modest grant from a number of public bodies, including Liverpool's Digital Departures project. The result is miraculous. It has ended the director's unhappy professional drought, returned him to the wellspring of his early autobiographical inspiration, and done so in such a way as to create new perspectives on the unholy trinity of class, sexuality and Catholicism. The movie might even inaugurate a new "late" period for this director: one showing him making peace with himself and with his past, but still laying painfully bare the cost of this process.



#### E. DEATH RACE

The old Roger Corman exploitation romp undergoes a go-faster upgrade in this bone-headed yarn about convicts forced to race for their lives in a World Gone Insane. Once out of the starting grid, the film proceeds to edit the action so dementedly that one struggles to work out whose car just exploded, who flipped over and who's driving the one with the missile-launcher on the roof. But that's OK, because by this point we're past caring anyway. When the people in this film talk to each other, they might as well be revving their engines or honking their horns. Watching *Death Race* is like entering a dance marathon with a pneumatic drill as your partner.



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**Example:**

**0. Which film is a recent treatment of an old subject?**

<b>A</b>	
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**Which film ...**

1. has appeared after some years' lack of directorial inspiration?
2. is a masterpiece based on its director's experiences?
3. is criticised for being poorly edited?
4. is described as being much better than a previous work by the same director?
5. is described as being rather conventional but entertaining and with good actors?
6. pays more attention to its grand scenery than to character development?
7. shows the story in a visual, unemotional way?


## COMPRESIÓN DE LECTURA - TASK 2 (1 x 7 = 7 marks)

Read the text about a rescue in a building on fire. Then read through sentences 1 – 7, choose the option (A, B or C) which best expresses the information in the text and write the letter in the corresponding box on the right.

Question 0 has been completed as an example.

### INFERNO

When Jim Grant spotted black smoke billowing out of a San Diego apartment building on his way to work, he stopped his car to dial 911, then did something totally out of character: The contractor circled back to take another look. Grant made a U-turn.

Pulling up to the three-story building, Grant was surprised to find bystanders on the sidewalk but no firefighters. Flames were shooting out of a second-floor window.

"Has anyone gone into that building to make sure it's cleared out?" Grant asked. They said no-and he couldn't see or hear any fire engines approaching. Then he sprinted to a side entrance and bounded up the stairwell.

On the second floor, he opened the door to an 80-foot hallway. "It was hotter than hades in there and black with smoke," Grant says. "The smell from the burning wires and the foam and the plastic was just horrible." He crisscrossed the hallway, kicking and banging on each apartment door. Fire alarms were going off, and the sound of flames roared from the end unit. "Get out!" Grant hollered over the din. No one responded, and he assumed the residents had already escaped.

Reaching the end of the long hallway, though, Grant noticed that the door to No. 87 was open a crack. He kicked it wide open, finding a startled woman in a motorized wheelchair with a ten-year-old boy at her side and a tiny infant in her arms. "You have to get out of here right now! This building's on fire!" he screamed. The woman, Maria Catlett, looked at him in confusion and said something about changing clothes.

"You have to go right now!" he insisted. Catlett stayed put. Grant could scarcely breathe. He scooped up the baby and grabbed the boy by the collar, yelling, "C'mon! You're going with me!"

The smoke was getting thicker by the second, stinging his eyes and searing his throat. Grant was terrified that the baby would die of smoke inhalation if he didn't get her out fast. He clutched the tiny body to his chest, wrapping his jacket around her, then bolted down the hallway, dragging the little boy alongside. Safely outside, Grant handed the infant to an onlooker and turned to the boy, Hubert Catlett. "You stay with this guy," he said. "I'm going back up to get your mom."

Grant retraced his steps through the hellish passage, kicking the apartment doors-"just in case"-as he made his way back to the disabled woman's apartment. He found her in the bathroom, changing from her pajamas into jeans. "You have to leave here right now!" Grant shouted.

Catlett still refused, insisting she had to get dressed. Grant could feel his chest tightening, as he fought for air. I've tried twice now to rescue her, he told himself. I can't do any more, because I can't breathe, and I'm going to die.

"And I left," he says.

Only five minutes or so had passed since Grant had called 911. He assumed rescuers with oxygen masks would be there any second.

Maria Catlett was trying to hurry. She knew that her spinal deformity-coupled with pain from the C-section she'd had just a month earlier when her baby, Joanna, was born-meant she was unlikely to make it out on her own. She felt overwhelmed. "I couldn't breathe, and my head was aching," she recalls.

The first 911 call came in at 7:36 a.m., and the first unit arrived on the scene at 7:40. But when Grant got outside, the only help in sight was a young police officer, Caleb Knobel. Grant told him about the woman on the second floor.

"Will you take me?" Knobel asked.

"Let's go," said Grant, who'd caught his breath and was ready to venture in a third time.

"By now, the hallway was pretty dark," Grant recalls. "And it was hotter than it was the first two times. And a lot smokier. We ran down the hallway, when we got near the end of the hall-she appeared out of a big, thick cloud of black smoke in her wheelchair, racing toward us."



The three barreled to the stairwell, and the two men lifted Catlett out of her wheelchair and took her down to her waiting children. Then they went back up and carried out the wheelchair.

No one was injured in the December 11 fire, which was caused by a damaged electrical cord. The Catlett family lost everything. "I know it was very dangerous to stay behind," says Maria, "but I wasn't thinking clearly. I realize I could have died."

The Catletts weren't the only ones Grant saved that day. "I hear from tenants all the time, saying, 'If it weren't for that guy banging on my door that morning, I wouldn't have known,'" says apartment manager Luis Leguizamo.

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**Example:**

**0. On his way to work, Jim Grant was ...**

**A** approaching the fire site.

**B** going around the fire site.

**C** moving away from the fire site.

C	
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1. Jim Grant's first move was ...

**A** to rescue the people trapped in the building.

**B** to ensure everybody had left the building.

**C** to warn people inside the building.

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2. To put them in a safe place, Jim had to ...

**A** carry the boy and the baby out of the building.

**B** persuade the mother to carry the baby in her wheelchair.

**C** urge the boy to follow him.

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3. To protect the baby from the smoke, Grant ...

**A** covered her.

**B** dragged her.

**C** put her on his back.

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4. When Jim Grant returned to the building, he ...

**A** had to kick his way through the hallway.

**B** hardly remembered the way back to the apartment.

**C** couldn't make Maria Catlett leave.

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5. Maria Catlett was unable to escape the building on her own because ...

**A** her ability to move was impaired.

**B** she'd just had a baby.

**C** she was too affected by smoke.

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6. When Grant and Knobel went to rescue Maria, she ...

**A** moved slowly because the smoke was thicker.

**B** was hurrying out of her apartment in her wheelchair.

**C** was trapped in her wheelchair.

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7. There were no victims in the fire ...

**A** although the emergency services were uncooperative.

**B** as a result of the prompt intervention of a police officer.

**C** because of Grant's initial decision to make a U-turn.

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## COMPRESIÓN DE LECTURA - TASK 3 (0,5 x 12 = 6 marks)

Read the text and then decide which of the options below (A, B or C) best fits each space. Write the letter in the corresponding box on the right.  
Question 0 has been completed as an example.

### GEORGE CARLIN

THE "DISSAPPOINTED IDEALIST" WHO BECAME A CULT COMEDIAN



George Carlin, who has died aged 71, was a \_\_\_\_\_ (0)\_\_\_\_\_ stand-up comic in the tradition of Lenny Bruce, who once defined the comedian's duty as to "find out where the line is and to cross it deliberately". And for the best part of four decades, that's exactly what Carlin did, said Bruce Weber in *The New York Times*. Balding and pony-tailed, he "prowled the stage, eyes ablaze with intensity" in \_\_\_\_\_ (1)\_\_\_\_\_ from Las Vegas to London, as he railed against the absurdities of modern American life, such as hyphenated names, the infatuation with camcorders, and trainers with lights in the soles. "When you're born, you get a ticket to the freak show," he *once* \_\_\_\_\_ (2)\_\_\_\_\_ in an interview. "When you're born in America, you get a front-row seat."

George Denis Patrick Carlin was born in New York in 1937. His mother, a secretary, taught him to scorn all misuses of language from an early age, said *The Independent*, and this would become one of the abiding themes of Carlin's comedy. (He ridiculed euphemisms such as "collateral damage", and picked apart phrases such as "jumbo shrimp" and "military intelligence", both of which he regarded as oxymorons.) He \_\_\_\_\_ (3)\_\_\_\_\_ out of school at the age of 17 and after an inglorious stint in the US air force - during which he was \_\_\_\_\_ (4)\_\_\_\_\_ "an unproductive airman" - he began working as a comic. His early material was fairly conventional, however. It wasn't until the late Sixties that Carlin realised the people he was entertaining weren't his friends: they were the parents of his friends. Feeling he was "a traitor", he decided to transform his act, lacing it with obscenities, and \_\_\_\_\_ (5)\_\_\_\_\_ subjects considered taboo at the time, such as the Vietnam War.

The controversial nature of the new material initially cost him bookings, but \_\_\_\_\_ (6)\_\_\_\_\_ time Carlin became a cult figure on American campuses, said *The Times*, and his comedy albums began to sell in their millions. He \_\_\_\_\_ (7)\_\_\_\_\_ his greatest notoriety as a result of a routine entitled *Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television*, which he first performed in 1972 in Milwaukee. With rhythmical, almost lyrical repetition, Carlin runs through the list of words (from "shit" to "tits") that he claimed the authorities thought would "curve your spine, warp your mind, and keep the country from winning the war". He was arrested for the Milwaukee show and the ensuing controversy eventually reached the Supreme Court. By the \_\_\_\_\_ (8)\_\_\_\_\_ margin of five to four, the judges decided to uphold the right of the US government to censor material that might be heard by children - a ruling that still stands today. As for Carlin, he merely observed that the debate had made his name "a \_\_\_\_\_ (9)\_\_\_\_\_ in American history, which I'm perversely kind of proud of".

From 1977 to 1982 he stopped \_\_\_\_\_ (10) \_\_\_\_\_ owing to heart problems exacerbated by his cocaine addiction. Carlin \_\_\_\_\_ (11) \_\_\_\_\_ the habit, however, and on his comeback tour seemed to have lost none of the fire in his belly. He insisted on performing his *Seven Words* routine at Carnegie Hall, even extending it. (As the credits come down on the recording of that night, he can still be heard intoning the contentious list.) If anything, said Weber, Carlin's act became more ferocious as the years went by. His favourite topics included suicide, natural disasters (and the desire to see them increase in severity), war, abortion, and his general \_\_\_\_\_ (12) \_\_\_\_\_ of sympathy for homo sapiens. "I think we're already 'circling the drain' as a species," he said once, "and I'd love to see the circles get a little faster; and a little shorter." In 2004 Carlin's run at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas was cancelled after he so insulted his audience that he almost started a riot. Although he later checked into rehab for addiction to alcohol and painkillers, Carlin never apologised for his misanthropic persona. "Scratch any cynic," he liked to point out, "and you'll find a disappointed idealist." He is survived by Sally, his second wife, and his daughter from his first marriage, Kelly.

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**Example: 0. A foul-up**  
**B foul-mouthed**  
**C mouthwash**

<b>B</b>	
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1. **A** sights  
**B** sites  
**C** venues

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7. **A** achieved  
**B** attempted  
**C** fulfilled

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2. **A** accounted  
**B** remarked  
**C** reported

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8. **A** low  
**B** narrow  
**C** short

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3. **A** dropped  
**B** skipped  
**C** stepped

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9. **A** breakthrough  
**B** drop  
**C** footnote

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4. **A** appointed  
**B** classified  
**C** labelled

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10. **A** perform  
**B** performing  
**C** to perform

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5. **A** dealing  
**B** tackling  
**C** undertaking

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11. **A** hitched  
**B** kicked  
**C** sacked

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6. **A** about  
**B** in  
**C** on

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12. **A** affluence  
**B** lack  
**C** short

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